REMARKS

The Examiner's Action mailed on February 3, 2006, has been received and its contents carefully considered. Additionally attached to this Amendment is a Petition for a One-month Extension of Time, extending the period for response to June 3, 2006.

In this Amendment, Applicants have editorially amended the specification and claim 1, and cancelled claim 3 without prejudice. Claim 1 is the sole independent claim, and claims 1, 2 and 4-6 are pending in the application. For at least the following reasons, it is submitted that this application is in condition for allowance.

The specification was objected to for incorporating by reference essential material, not being a US patent or published application. The specification has been amended accordingly, such that the Japanese priority document is no longer incorporated by reference, and it is therefore respectfully requested that this objection be withdrawn.

Claims 1, 2 and 4-6 were rejected under 35 USC §102(b) as anticipated by *Anguera* (US 4,572,314). This rejection is respectfully traversed.

Claim 3 was not rejected over *Anguera*, and the features of claim 3 have now been imported into claim 1, from which all the other claims depend. The claims as amended are therefore allowable over *Anguera*.

In *Anguera*, drive pinion **20** is too close to ball nut **33** with respect to an axial direction of a steering shaft, i.e. it can clearly be seen from FIG. 1 of *Anguera* that the distance between the middle of ball nut **33** and the middle of drive pinion **20** is *not* "20 to 45 times" the distance between the middle of drive pinion **20** and the middle of resilient push member **43**. Hence, unlike in the present invention, when forward bending moments are applied, the right-hand end of the shaft in FIG. 1 will be displaced significantly.

Claims 1-6 were rejected under 35 USC §102(a) as anticipated by *Menjak et al.* (US 6,749,040 B1). This rejection is respectfully traversed.

In *Menjak et al.*, rack bearing **20** and pinion **7** are too close together with respect to an axial direction of a steering shaft. It can be said that the rack bearing **20** and the pinion **7** are substantially in the same axial position with respect to the axial direction of the steering shaft. Therefore, when forward and rearward bending moments are applied, the steering shaft is significantly displaced at a middle portion of ball nut **14** and the rack bearing **20** (corresponding to the pinion **7**). As a result of this, support rigidity is reduced relative to the claimed invention.

Moreover, in *Menjak et al.*, forward and rearward bending moments do not both "press the steering shaft against the rotatable cylinder pivotally about a point where the pinion meshes with the steering shaft" as claimed, as the shaft cannot pivot about pinion **7** due to the presence of the rack bearing **20** in substantially the same axial position as the pinion **7**.

It is submitted that this application is in condition for allowance. Such action and the passing of this case to issue are requested.

Should the Examiner feel that a conference would help to expedite the prosecution of this application, the Examiner is hereby invited to contact the undersigned counsel to arrange for such an interview.

Should the remittance be accidentally missing or insufficient, the Commissioner is hereby authorized to charge the fee to our Deposit Account No. 18-0002, and advise us accordingly.

Respectfully submitted,

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Date

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